

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

1. (previously presented) Process for preparing a mercaptan comprising contacting a thioether and hydrogen sulphide, in the presence of hydrogen and a catalyst composition comprising a strong acid and at least one metal selected from group VIII of the Periodic Table.
2. (previously presented) Process according to claim 1, wherein the strong acid is selected from the group consisting of:
 - (a) one or more heteropolyacids selected from the group $H_3PW_{12}O_{40} \cdot nH_2O$, $H_4SiW_{12}O_{40} \cdot nH_2O$ or $H_6P_2W_{18}O_{62} \cdot nH_2O$, in which n is an integer representing the number of molecules of water of crystallization, and is between 0 and 30, potassium, rubidium, caesium or ammonium salts thereof and mixtures of such salts;
 - (b) a sulphated zirconium oxide,
 - (c) a tungstic zirconium oxide,
 - (d) a zeolite, and
 - (e) a cationic resin.
3. (previously presented) Process according to claim 1, wherein the strong acid is selected from the group potassium, rubidium, caesium or ammonium salts or a mixture of such salts of $H_3PW_{12}O_{40} \cdot nH_2O$, $H_4SiW_{12}O_{40} \cdot nH_2O$ or $H_6P_2W_{18}O_{62} \cdot nH_2O$, in which n is an integer representing the number of molecules of water of crystallization, and is between 0 and 30, a sulphated zirconium oxide, a tungstic zirconium oxide, a zeolite, and a cationic resin.
4. (previously presented) Process according to claim 1, wherein the catalyst composition comprises:
 - from 90% to 99.9%, by weight of strong acid, and
 - from 0.01% to 10%, by weight of at least one metal from group VIII.

5. (previously presented) Process according to claim 1, wherein the strong acid is a heteropolyacid selected from the group $H_3PW_{12}O_{40} \cdot nH_2O$, $H_4SiW_{12}O_{40} \cdot nH_2O$ or $H_6P_2W_{18}O_{62} \cdot nH_2O$, in which n is an integer representing the number of molecules of water of crystallization, and is between 0 and 30.
6. (previously presented) Process according to claim 5, wherein the catalyst composition comprises:
- from 10% to 60%, by weight of strong acid,
 - from 0.01% to 10%, by weight of at least one metal from group VIII, and
 - from 30% to 80%, by weight of a support selected from silica SiO_2 , alumina Al_2O_3 , titanium dioxide TiO_2 , zirconium oxide ZrO_2 , and activated carbon.
7. (previously presented) Process according to claim 6, wherein the strong acid is 12-phosphotungstic acid.
8. (previously presented) Process according to one of claim 1, wherein the at least one metal is selected from iron, cobalt, nickel, ruthenium, rhodium, palladium, osmium, iridium, and platinum.
9. (previously presented) Process according to claim 1, wherein the at least one metal is selected from palladium, ruthenium, and platinum.
10. (previously presented) Process according to claim 1, wherein the at least one metal is palladium.
11. (previously presented) Process according to claim 1 wherein the catalyst composition comprises approximately 40% by weight of 12-phosphotungstic acid, 1% of palladium and 59% of silica.
12. (previously presented) Process according to claim 1, wherein the hydrogen is introduced

in an amount corresponding to a molar H_2S/H_2 ratio of between 10 and 200.

13. (previously presented) Process according to claim 1, wherein the thioether has the general formula:



in which R and R', which are identical or different, represent a linear or branched alkyl radical of 1 to 20 carbon atoms, or else a cycloalkyl radical of 3 to 7 carbon atoms.

14. (previously presented) Process according to claim 1, wherein the hydrogen sulphide is introduced in an amount corresponding to a molar H_2S /thioether ratio of between 1 and 40.

15. (previously presented) Process according to claim 1, wherein the catalyst composition comprises:

- from 98.5% to 99.9%, by weight of strong acid, and
- from 0.05% to 1.5%, by weight of at least one metal from group VIII.

16. (previously presented) Process according to Claim 5, wherein the catalyst composition comprises:

- from 25 to 50%, by weight of strong acid,
- from 0.1% to 2%, by weight of at least one metal from group VIII, and
- from 48% to 75%, by weight of a support selected from silica SiO_2 , alumina Al_2O_3 , titanium dioxide TiO_2 , zirconium oxide ZrO_2 , and activated carbon.

17. (previously presented) Process according to claim 1, wherein the hydrogen is introduced in an amount corresponding to a molar H_2S/H_2 ratio of between 50 and 100.

18. (previously presented) Process according to claim 1, wherein the hydrogen sulphide is introduced in an amount corresponding to a molar H_2S /thioether ratio of between 2 and 30.

19. (previously presented) Process according to claim 1, wherein the hydrogen sulphide is introduced in an amount corresponding to a molar H_2S /thioether ratio of between 2 and 10.

20. (previously presented) Process according to claim 1, wherein n is between 6 and 20.
21. (previously presented) Process according to claim 7, wherein said 12-phosphotungstic acid is impregnated on silica.
22. (previously presented) Process according to claim 13, wherein said linear or branched alkyl radical has 1 to 12 carbon atoms.